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March 13, 2018

The Honorable Ajit Pai, Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, DC 20554

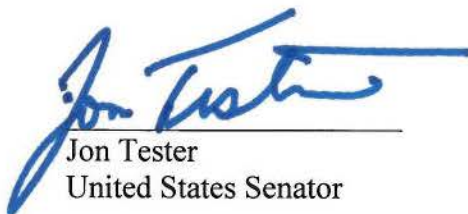
Dear Chairman Pai,

We write to express concerns with Federal Communication Commission (FCC) regulations that are causing significant delays on certain school broadband projects in rural states. School districts and telecommunications carriers in Montana are making tremendous progress to deliver high-speed broadband to schools in rural America. They are leveraging private, state and federal resources to ensure our kids can access the tools required for education in the 21st Century. Despite this progress, unnecessary regulations at the FCC are causing some schools to be left in the dark. It is unacceptable for bureaucratic red tape to stand in the way of high-speed internet being delivered to rural classrooms. As such, we urge you to take immediate corrective actions.

An example of a technical barrier that is blocking high-speed internet deployment is a recently instituted questionnaire that asks parties to provide unnecessary information to the federal government. The questionnaire asks for excessive information that is difficult for companies and small school districts to deliver to the FCC. The questionnaire is leading to long delays if not outright denial of projects. You must not let burdensome paperwork stand between Montana students and their access to critical educational material.

A quality public education is the foundation of our democracy and our future workforce. To ensure our children are prepared for a globally connected economy and for 21st century jobs, it is vital that all classrooms are equipped with high-speed internet. We stand ready to work with the FCC to reduce bureaucratic barriers and enhance opportunities for high-speed internet deployment. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Jon Tester
United States Senator



Steve Bullock
Governor of Montana



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

May 10, 2018

The Honorable John Tester
United States Senate
311 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

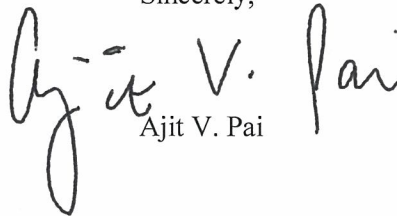
Dear Senator Tester:

Thank you for your letter regarding the E-Rate program. I believe an effective E-Rate program—one that promotes better connectivity for students and library patrons alike—can be a powerful tool to help bridge the digital divide. I am happy to hear that through E-Rate, school districts and telecommunications carriers in Montana are making tremendous progress in delivering high-speed broadband to schools in rural America. That's exactly the type of progress that rural Americans need and deserve if we are going to close the digital divide.

I also agree that bureaucratic red tape should not stand in the way of high-speed Internet being delivered to rural classrooms. Unfortunately, there have been serious flaws in the administration of the E-Rate program. That's why I have asked the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC), which implements this program on the FCC's behalf, to improve administration of E-Rate so that schools and libraries in need do not get trapped by unnecessary technicalities. Much of USAC's work over this past year has focused on addressing critical IT issues and bringing the E-Rate Productivity Center portal—created at the direction of the FCC all the way back in 2014—up to par. As a result, for Funding Year 2017, USAC issued funding commitments and disbursements at a faster pace than the previous year. I expect additional improvements to other aspects of E-Rate administration this year to make it easier for schools and libraries to apply for and receive funding without enduring unnecessary delays or denials.

I appreciate your interest in this matter. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Ajit V. Pai". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Ajit" being the most prominent part.

Ajit V. Pai



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

May 10, 2018

The Honorable Steve Bullock
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 200801
Helena MT 59620-0801

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Ajit V. Pai